



University of Connecticut

Testimony

By

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Labor Committee Public Hearing

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**“An Act Granting Graduate Assistants at State Universities the Right to Bargain Collectively”
Raised Bill No. 7264**

The University of Connecticut enrolls about 5,639 graduate students. From this number, about 1,149 serve as research assistants another 947 serve as teaching assistants. Another 216 hold both research and teaching assistantships

A graduate assistantship – either teaching or research - involves a 20 hour per week commitment for a “full-time” assistantship. A half-time assistantship involves about 10 hours per week. For an academic year (10 months), 20 hour per week assistantship the stipend ranges from \$18,270 to \$21,371. If equated to a ten month, 40 hour week, the range becomes \$36,540 to \$42,742. Those GAs with at least a half time assistantship also qualify for tuition remission and medical benefits. There are some GAs with assistantships with smaller percentages of commitment.

When the value of tuition remission (\$20,772 per year for full time out of state graduate students) and the annual state share of medical insurance for single coverage (\$2243) are added to the stipend, total compensation on a 40 hour week equivalent becomes \$ 59,555 to \$ 65,757.

The University has worked hard to provide competitive stipends and attractive medical and dental insurance to our graduate assistants. In fact, the package provided to our GAs is among the best in the country. The primary purpose of such assistantships is to offset the cost of attending graduate school while providing opportunities for practical experience in activities related to the student’s academic program.

Graduate Assistants are students first. They must be accepted into a graduate program to be eligible for an assistantship. While graduate assistants do provide service to the University, the greater value is to the student in terms of their academic experience. The mentoring relationship with faculty advisor is invaluable. In essence, GAs have the opportunity for one-on-one interaction on a daily or weekly basis with a very highly trained professional in their field. This relationship transcends that of supervisor/subordinate. Establishing an employer/employee relationship could chill the value of the mentoring experience converting it from a primarily academic experience to a work for hire obligation.

Enclosed is the current stipend schedule for graduate assistants at the University of Connecticut as well as the schedule of health insurance rates.

Also enclosed is a spreadsheet comparing the terms of graduate assistantships (GAs) offered at the University of Connecticut's peer institutions. The data include the amount of the annual stipend and information related to medical benefits.

Because the relationship between a graduate assistant and the university is foremost an academic one, imposing upon it the structure of an employment relationship will be a disservice to the student. Given the fact that the University has aggressively developed and maintained attractive stipends and benefits in addition to tuition remission, the traditional reasons for bargaining collectively are absent.

Graduate Assistant Benefits Comparison

| College | Amount of Stipend: Full Time Student | Name of Coverage | Type of Coverage |
|---|---|--|--|
| University of Iowa <small>*Union: United Electrical, Radio, & Machine Workers of America, Local 896</small> | \$15,985 for half-time academic year appointment, \$19,537 for a half-time fiscal year appointment | SHIP (Student Health Insurance Plan) <small>*Iowa Blue Cross Blue Shield</small> UIGRADCare <small>*Iowa Blue Cross Blue Shield</small> | Hospitalization, surgery, maternity, well-baby/well-care child to age 7, emergency care for accidents or illness, medically necessary physician care and prescription drugs Hospitalization, medical, outpatient, physical therapy, routine physicals, newborn care, well-child checkups, prescription drugs and mental health/chemical dependency |
| UMASS | \$10,560 per year | Basic/SHIP (Student Health Insurance Plan) | General practitioners, physical therapists, mental health, X-Rays, nutritionists and laboratory services at UMASS, SHIP covers catastrophic emergencies, prescriptions, hospitalizations, specialty and outside referrals |
| University of Minnesota | \$9,426 to \$14,682 per year | Boynton Health Services/Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN | preventive care, labs, x-ray, routine eye exams and physicals, immunizations, prenatal care, well-child care, surgical, hospitalization, physical therapy, chemotherapy, prescription drugs, mental health and chemical dependency care, medical equipment |
| University of Missouri | \$21,400 per year | The Chickering Group - Aetna Open Choice PPO | Hospitalization, surgical, office visits, physical therapy, chiropractic therapy, maternity, dental for accident/injury to sound, natural teeth, no prescription; optional Vital Savings by Aetna (dental and vision care) \$25/yr |
| University of Connecticut | \$18,270 per year for beginners to \$21,371 per year for PhD students | Anthem GA - BC Point of Enrollment Anthem GA - BC Point of Service | Routine eye exam, well-child care (up to 12 years), audiological screening, primary care, x-rays and lab work, hospitalization, emergency care, mental health, substance abuse Routine eye exam, well-child care (up to 12 years), audiological screening, primary care, x-rays and lab work, hospitalization, emergency care, mental health, substance abuse |

Graduate Assistant Benefits Comparison

| College | Amount of Stipend: Full Time Student | Name of Coverage | Type of Coverage |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Ohio State University | \$13,330 per year (varies by dept.) | Student Health Insurance | Medical, dental, vision, WholeHealth Discount Program, Prescription Drug benefit |
| | | University Prime Care | Medical, Prescription Drug benefit, Global Care services, WholeHealth Discount Program, Physical Therapy, |
| Rutgers University | \$20,916 per year | NJ Plus | Must utilize the University Health Center first for all primary health care needs, no dental, no yearly physicals/eye exams (accident/sickness plan), prescription through Major Medical but at a fairly high deductible |
| Georgia State University | \$11,000 - \$14,600 | Student Accident and Sickness Insurance Plan | The Company will pay a percentage of the eligible expenses in excess of a deductible of \$50 (waived if student first treated at GA State Infirmary) per accident/illness not to exceed \$25,000. \$10,000 for vehicle accident, prescription drugs shall be payable at 80% for generic drugs, 50% for brand name |
| Iowa State University | \$10,000 - \$24,000 per year | ISU Student and Scholar Health Insurance Plan (SSHIP) | Hospitalization, surgery, outpatient expenses, well-child care, physician office visits, labs and x-rays, mental health and substance abuse, maternity benefits, accident/injury to sound, natural teeth, |
| Purdue University | \$14,325 - \$18,000 per year | Graduate Student Staff Injury and Sickness Insurance Plan | Hospitalization, Prescription Drugs, Surgeon's Fees, Radiation & Chemotherapy, Routine Well Child Care, Dental Treatment, Maternity, Preventive Care (up to \$500 at PUSH) |

GRADUATE ASSISTANT STIPEND - ACADEMIC YEAR 2006/2007

| Level | 12 Month Stipend | Percent Employed | Biweekly Stipend | Fall Semester and New Spring HIRES (9.8 pay periods) | | Spring Continuations Only (9.7 pay periods) | 2 Semesters Full Academic Year (19.5 pay periods) |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|-------------|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| B - Beginners | \$24,360.00 | 100.00% | \$936.93 | \$9,181.91 | \$9,088.22 | \$18,270.14 | \$13,702.65 |
| | | 75.00% | \$702.70 | \$6,886.46 | \$6,816.19 | \$9,135.17 | |
| | | 50.00% | \$468.47 | \$4,591.01 | \$4,544.16 | | |
| M - Masters | \$25,635.00 | 100.00% | \$985.97 | \$9,662.51 | \$9,563.91 | \$19,226.42 | \$14,419.86 |
| | | 75.00% | \$739.48 | \$7,246.90 | \$7,172.96 | \$9,613.31 | |
| | | 50.00% | \$492.99 | \$4,831.30 | \$4,782.00 | | |
| D - DVM Residency Program | \$27,060.00 | 100.00% | \$1,040.77 | \$10,199.55 | \$10,095.47 | \$20,295.02 | \$15,221.31 |
| | | 75.00% | \$780.58 | \$7,649.68 | \$7,571.63 | \$10,147.61 | |
| | | 50.00% | \$520.39 | \$5,099.82 | \$5,047.78 | | |
| P - PhD | \$28,495.00 | 100.00% | \$1,095.97 | \$10,740.51 | \$10,630.91 | \$21,371.42 | \$16,028.61 |
| | | 75.00% | \$821.98 | \$8,055.40 | \$7,973.21 | \$10,685.81 | |
| | | 50.00% | \$547.99 | \$5,370.30 | \$5,315.50 | | |

***** 12 MONTH STIPEND IS NOT TO BE USED IN THE OFFER LETTER**

Semester Dates:

- 08/23/06-05/22/07 (FULL ACADEMIC YEAR) done with one PA = 19.5 pay-periods x Bi-Weekly \$ = Offer Amt.
- 08/23/06-01/05/07 (FALL SEMESTER ONLY) done with one PA = 9.8 pay-periods x Bi-Weekly \$ = Offer Amt.
- 01/06/07-05/22/07 (CONTINUATIONS ONLY) 9.7 PAY PERIODS X BI-WEEKLY \$ = Offer Amt.**
- 01/05/07-05/22/07 (SPRING SEMESTER ONLY) done with one PA = 9.8 pay periods x Bi-Weekly \$ = Offer Amt.

You can not arrive at the "Full Academic Year" stipend by doubling the stipend paid for one semester.